



# Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

## INSIDE TRACKS

The Newsletter of Region One

Volume 6, No. 2

Spring 1996

## Grizzly Manager Helps Bears & People Coexist

According to FWP's Grizzly Bear Management Specialist Tim Manley, successful bear management means keeping bears and humans apart. And because people now live throughout bear habitat, this task is not easy.

"People and bears now share habitat in the valleys of northwest Montana," Manley says. "It's amazing how many grizzlies move among residences around the Flathead Valley; many of these bears are never seen by area residents."

Manley cites the example of the largest radio-collared grizzly in the area, formerly known as the "Dairy Queen Bear" by Bigfork residents. This 600-pound male spent three months last fall between Bigfork, Ferndale, Crane Mountain, and other areas of the valley. Manley says that the bear "moved under cover of darkness and, as far as I know, was never seen by anyone last year."

STATE DOCUMENTS COLLECTION

APR 22 1996

Because of a poor huckleberry crop and other factors, 1995 proved to be one of the worst years in memory for grizzly/human conflicts in northwest Montana. Manley trapped and moved 12 different grizzlies between Bigfork and Essex. In each of these cases, grizzlies ranged close to residences because they were attracted by bird feeders, fruit trees, or garbage.

"Many people don't realize that grizzlies eat seeds and grains put out for birds and deer," says Manley. "Most problems of attracting grizzlies to residences could be avoided if people did not feed wildlife from April through November."

The best way to reduce the problems associated with grizzlies becoming habituated to residential areas is to remove the food reward. If no attractants are available, Manley says, grizzlies will move on. Often, "adversive conditioning techniques," such as rub-

ber bullets, cracker shells, pepper spray, and high decibel alarms, are used to discourage bears which have become attracted by odorous foods.

If all else fails, the grizzly is trapped and relocated while the attractants are cleaned up. Sometimes, the trapping and moving experience modifies the bear's behavior—the bear avoids a repeat experience. In other cases, though, the bear returns to residences and gets into trouble again.

Of the 12 grizzlies Manley captured in 1995 (some of them more than once), six ended up denning and are still in the wild. Three eventually were placed in zoos, one was killed at Coram, and the fate of two of the grizzlies is unknown.

"About half of the grizzlies we move eventually end up dead or removed from the ecosystem," he said. "That's (Cont. on Page 2)



**GRIZZLY BEAR**  
*Management Specialist Tim Manley works with an anesthetized 3-year-old female grizzly which frequented bird feeders near Pinnacle. The bear was relocated into the Great Bear Wilderness. About half of the bears which have to be moved end up dead or removed from the ecosystem, according to Manley.*

## IN THIS ISSUE

- GRIZZLY MANAGER HELPS BEARS & PEOPLE COEXIST
- HUNTER EDUCATION INSTRUCTORS RECEIVE AWARDS
- TIPS FOR LIVING IN GRIZZLY BEAR COUNTRY
- SUPERVISOR'S CORNER: DAN VINCENT
- BIOLOGISTS FOCUS ON FRESHWATER COD IN KOOTENAI SYSTEM



FREE COPY

PLEASE HELP YOURSELF

# Hunter Education Instructors Receive Awards

Steven Stafford and April Kelly, two volunteer assistant Hunter Education Instructors in the Kalispell area, received special awards of merit at Region One's spring instructor workshop held in March. Both Stafford and Kelly have contributed greatly to the hunter education program in northwest Montana.

Stafford served five years as a junior or assistant instructor in the program, leading the archery station during the field exercises the past few years. Kelly has served as the lead assistant instructor, organizing training and other activities for the 13 other juniors in the program.

Both Kelly and Stafford turned 18 this year, and are now full instructors. They each received a letter of recogni-

tion and a buck knife.

The assistant instructor program is open to youngsters 12 to 17 years of

age who have completed the standard Hunter Education Course. Contact FWP for more information.



**AWARD TIME.** Hunter Education Instructors Steven Stafford and April Kelly receive special awards of merit as they reach full instructor status. Both young people have contributed greatly to the hunter education program in northwest Montana.

## Grizzly Manager Helps Bears & People Coexist

(Cont. from Page 1)

why it's so important to prevent bears from becoming food conditioned in the first place, and to develop and test better tools for aversive conditioning."

Manley hopes he doesn't see a repeat of 1995. During the third week of August, for example, he spent about 100 hours, night and day, chasing grizzlies.

He worked on aversive conditioning for a sow and cub near Lake Five

one weekend, then was called into the Great Bear Wilderness to help the Forest Service with a sow and three cubs which ranged close to the Schafer Meadows Guard Station. When he got out of the wilderness, he found out that the Lake Five grizzly had returned and broken out a window.

"The bear was walking by the house and swiped at its reflection in the window," Manley recalled. Finally that weekend, Manley and others trapped the sow and its cub and relocated them

into Glacier National Park.

Things really picked up in September as several bears moved in to the Flathead Valley and took up residence. Manley didn't get a day off that month, and his phone rang day and night.

Manley noted that none of the grizzlies showed aggression towards people, and he is convinced that bears and people can coexist. "If folks remove the attractants, they won't see these bears," he said.

### **Things you can do to reduce the chances of bear/human conflicts:**

**Garbage** should be stored where bears can neither smell nor gain access to it, either in a bear-proof container or inside a building that bears can't get into. Haul garbage to an approved disposal site as often as possible, but at least once a week.



**Fruits and vegetables** attract bears. Electric fencing is best to keep bears out of orchards. Pick all ripe fruit from trees and from the ground as soon as possible. Do not leave fruit on trees through the fall.

Vegetable gardens should be away

from forests or shrubs; electric fencing is a good idea.

**Livestock & pet food** should be stored in bear-proof containers, preferably inside a building that bears can't get inside. Don't leave leftover livestock food out overnight.

**Pets** should be kept inside at night. Don't leave pet food outside.

**Sheep** are easy prey for bears and should be closely herded.

**Pigs**, and foods normally fed to pigs, are very attractive to bears. Consider electric fencing or not keeping pigs in bear country.

Do not bury dead livestock. Bears will dig up carcasses.

**Honey** and bee larvae attract bears. You can protect bee hives with electric fencing or by elevating the hives on platforms supported by metal poles that bears can't climb.

**Bird feeders** can also attract bears. Feed suet only during the winter months, and suspend hummingbird feeders out of reach of bears.

**Children** must be closely supervised outdoors. Make sure children are not outside before dawn or after dusk. Talk with your children about bears and teach them what to do if they encounter one.

# SUPERVISOR'S CORNER: Dan Vincent

In February, after nearly two years in the making, FWP held a hearing in Kalispell to solicit final public comment on 1996 hunting season proposals. Nearly 400 people attended the meeting. Many testified and many more submitted written comments. The response was absolutely terrific!



A few days after the hearing, Wildlife Manager Harvey Nyberg and I paid a visit to Commissioner Charlie Decker's home in Libby to analyze, cuss, and discuss the public comments we received.

Charlie was sitting in his living room chair as we entered his home,

and surrounding him were several piles of written comments, all sorted and piled in stacks. Charlie's note pad was full with hash marks and notes.

I recalled at that moment, a point in the public meeting when the normally unflappable Commissioner got angry at one commentator who sarcastically suggested the Commission was going to "blow off pubic comment." Surely hunters must appreciate the time, energy and effort that goes into making these difficult decisions regarding your sport of hunting, I thought?

We posed this question to our Citizen Advisors recently. In general they were very complimentary of our season setting process, with one exception.

They politely explained that we all too often leave out one very important element—feedback to our constituents. Explaining **why** decisions are made and **why** some season types are selected over others.

The following, then, is a summary of three major hunting season proposals adopted by the Commission and a brief rationale for each.

More information regarding the "whys" of the particular decisions have been shared with you through recent news releases and information available at Department Headquarters. Feel free to give any of us a call if you have questions, and thank you again for participating in the process. Your comments **do** count!

## Summary of Major Hunting Season Proposals Adopted

### DEER:

#### **1. General Season** (adopted split season for white-tailed deer)

Hunting District 100 through 141

Either-sex	10/27—11/03
Antlered buck, either-species	11/04—11/24
Either-sex - white-tailed deer and	
Antlered buck - mule deer	11/25—12/01

**Rationale:** Provides hunters with an option to harvest an antlerless white-tailed deer during the last week of the general season. Other benefits include: hunters may take does rather than small bucks during the last week, thereby saving those bucks for the future; and it affords antlerless mule deer more protection by eliminating one week of the either sex mule deer season. Many hunters supported this change in their comments.

**2. Libby Special White-tailed Deer Management Area—** use smaller area (Hunting District 100 & 103) and adjust B-tags as follows\*:

Hunting District 100	300 B-tags
Hunting District 103	100 B-tags
Hunting District 104	100 B-tags

\*Quotas for all districts may be adjusted following winter population surveys.

**Rationale:** The Commission took this action to address persistent game damage problems on private lands around Libby. Most of the hunters who commented preferred the smaller boundary option.

### ELK:

#### **1. General Season**

Hunting Districts 121, 123, 124 —

Brow-tined bull/antlerless on permits

Hunting District 121	550 Antlerless Permits
Hunting District 123	100 Antlerless Permits
Hunting District 124	150 Antlerless Permits.
Other hunting districts	same as 1995.

**Rationale:** This proposal is a response to public input received from Sanders County Hunters. Eliminating the either sex season will give biologists better control of the antlerless harvest. The brow-tined bull regulation should allow more bulls to survive to an older age.

#### **2. Antlerless permits adopted as proposed:**

Hunting District 110:

Antlerless permits were eliminated

Hunting District 132:

20 Antlerless permits for foothills portion

Hunting District 141:

50 Antlerless permits for Nyack portion

**Rationale:** The elimination of cow permits in area 110 was in response to concern over predation in the North Fork. Permits in areas 132 and 141 were established for game damage control. Antlerless permit numbers will be finalized in August.

### BLACK BEAR:

**1. Spring Season** in Bear Management Units 103, 106, and 107 will extend from 4/15 through 5/31 as in 1995.

**Rationale:** The recommendation to shorten the spring black bear season was dropped because of concerns expressed by the public. FWP will establish a black bear management committee comprised of hunters, outfitters, a representative of the Citizen Advisory Committee, and FWP staff to assess the status of black bears in the region and identify management strategies to address biological concerns. The committee will also develop a set of recommendations for the future management of black bears. 

# Biologists Focus on Freshwater Cod in Kootenai System

"Burbot," "ling," "eel pout", and "lawyer," are all names that have been used to describe the only freshwater member of the cod family. West of the Continental Divide in Montana, burbot are found only in the Kootenai Drainage.

Over the past few years, biologists have been studying this mysterious fish as part of the Bonneville Power Administration-funded Libby Dam fisheries mitigation project.

"Very little is known about the biology of this fish across its range," said Fisheries Biologist Steve Dalbey.

"One important trend is that, unlike many other fish, burbot have responded favorably to the new reservoir environment when rivers have been dammed." Dalbey points to apparent increases in burbot numbers in Canyon Ferry and Fort Peck reservoirs.

Biologists Dalbey, Scott Snelson, and their crew have focused on the distribution of the fish, and the timing of burbot spawning in the Kootenai River and in Libby Reservoir. Burbot have been fitted with radio transmit-

ters to track movements, habitat preferences, and identify spawning sites.

This spring, biologists identified for the first time a large spawning run in the Kootenai River. Some of these burbot are being held in channels at the FWP Libby field station to determine how long they retain identifying tags. A few burbot were spawned and the eggs are being incubated to learn about the potential of culturing burbot.

Burbot now support a small but important fishery in the Kootenai River and in Libby Reservoir. Through their studies, biologists Dalbey and Snelson hope to learn enough about this elusive fish to maintain and enhance this fishery.



**FISHERIES** Biologist Steve Dalbey examines a burbot from the Kootenai River.

For More information on Fish, Wildlife & Parks issues, listen to:

"Northwest Outdoors," FWP's weekly radio show, Thursdays at 8:40 a.m. on KGEZ, 600 on your AM dial.

**INSIDE TRACKS** is published by Region One



Dan Vincent, Supervisor

Harvey Nyberg, Wildlife Manager

Jim Vashro, Fisheries Manager

Dave Conklin, Parks Manager

Ed Kelly, Warden Captain

Gail Williams, Office Manager

Brian Marotz, Fisheries Mitigation Coordinator

Alan Wood, Wildlife Mitigation Coordinator

John Fraley, Information Officer, Newsletter Editor

Montana State Library



3 0864 1006 3096 4

**INSIDE TRACKS**  
490 N. MERIDIAN ROAD  
KALISPELL, MT 59901-3854

BULK RATE  
POSTAGE PAID  
PERMIT NO. 93  
KALISPELL, MT  
59901-3854

MT STATE LIBRARY  
1515 E 6TH AVE  
HELENA MT 59620

FOR A FREE  
SUBSCRIPTION  
WRITE OR CALL:

**INSIDE TRACKS**  
490 N. MERIDIAN ROAD  
KALISPELL, MT 59901-3854  
406-752-5501